

CHAPTER 183

October 27, 2011

“Miss Yasogami High Pageant? That’s a thing? Why... Why is that a thing?”

Justin, Yu, and Yosuke had been hanging around the front of the school, just kind of hanging around and talking about stupid irrelevant bullshit when they had been distracted by a small commotion near the bulletin board; the same one that had housed the group’s exam scores the day prior. For the most part, the guys seemed pretty confused what it was about, partially because Yu and Justin were new, and they never pulled this kind of crap at their old schools. Yosuke had full knowledge of what was going on, for more reason than he had been letting on of course. He couldn’t help but smirk to himself as Justin read out loud the new event that had been scheduled for the festival; made possible in part by his utter and complete genius. Justin should be thanking him right now for doing such a great thing for the guys, but alas, he was a generous soul. No thanks were needed other than the smiles on their faces as they sat back and enjoyed. Plus; Justin would probably just beat the shit out of him in his attempt to be chivalrous and have respect for a woman’s sexuality and shit. Seriously, have I ever mentioned Justin was the perfect feminist? I have? Well he still was.

“What kind of idiot would sign up for something like this? Oh... Kashiwagi. Well that explains a lot actually.” Yu remarked with semi-sarcasm as his eyes rolled across the paper, examining the details of the event. He wasn’t a feminist or anything like that, but even then, he had to wonder why any girl would want to show her stuff off to a bunch of guys just so they could stare at them. He still didn’t seem to get why Rise was like that. At first he had attributed it to her Arcana, but then he recalled Maya was of the Lover’s arcane too, and she didn’t try to flirt with anything that had the physical prowess to hump something. Hell, she was pretty much a polar opposite to Rise in that regard, very shy and reserved; though that was more a result of constantly being put down due to her social status back in California. People liked her, don’t get me wrong, but no one liked her like THAT because she wore the same raggy clothes every day, and because she wasn’t exactly well-kempt. Perhaps that was the reason Maya fell in love with Justin; even amongst all her friends, it was clear no one really cared much to the fact that she lived like a hobo. Justin didn’t even seem to notice; maybe because he was so desperate for a friend it didn’t matter, maybe because he realized superficial appearances weren’t everything. Of course, that was beside the point; point was, it was rare to find a girl that was actually okay with that kind of shit.

At least; that’s what Yu thought at first. Then Justin and him actually looked at the list.

“Rise Kujikawa... That’s not very surprising.” Justin remarked sarcastically, rolling his eyes a bit. That girl needed to have some more self-respect for herself. It wasn’t Rise’s presence that had surprised the two though; it was every name that followed, Yu and Justin’s jaws dropping almost instantly. “Naoto? But... She’s still trying to be a guy, right? And... Yukiko!? Hold on, what the he-CHIE!?” Justin’s exasperation grew slowly as he realized people that would have no earthly business in a beauty contest were somehow showing up on the sign-up list. “Bu- I don- Ho-... THIS DOESN’T MAKE SENSE!” Justin shouted with great confusion. Yukiko and Naoto were baffling in their own right, but CHIE!? She had enough self-confidence issues; she wouldn’t even get up on stage for the music project without some prodding, let alone just to show her stuff off. Besides, Justin wasn’t quite sure he liked the idea of his girlfriend flaunting her stuff to a bunch of perverted teenagers. Maybe he was a little more jealous than he thought at first.

“This can’t possibly be right; Yukiko would never do something like this.” Yu remarked with suspicious anger as he examined the shit, tapping it with the tips of his fingers. He knew already that foul play was involved, though to what degree, he was still trying to figure out. Justin nodded his head with agreement, clearly sensing something was up. They might have just been able to get it to if it weren’t for the fact that Yosuke had realized they were catching onto his game already. He needed to distract them immediately.

“N-Nevermind that; you guys are free for lunch right now, right? I dunno why, but Chie asked us to come to the roof. She looked pretty serious... I wonder if something’s happened.” Yosuke stuttered slightly as he tried to cover his trails. Chie DID want to see them, and Yosuke WAS clueless on her true intention of the meeting; but telling the others that at this very moment was a tactical decision to get them away from the board before they could realize that was his handwriting.

“If getting signed up involuntarily to strip in front of a bunch of teenagers isn’t ‘something,’ I don’t know what is.”

“You better have a damn good explanation for this!”

So yeah, it goes without saying the girls weren’t buying into Yosuke’s bullshit; and why would they? It was pretty obvious he was lying right through his teeth. And it wasn’t like any of the girls were wrong to be pissed off at him; hell, the moment Chie proposed the theory that Yosuke was involved everyone ELSE got a little pissed off at Yosuke. Specifically Justin, who had grabbed him by the collar to prevent him from running. He didn’t have proof yet, but he was pretty sure it was Yosuke; and when he admitted to it, Justin planned to slam his teeth into the concrete beneath him.

“F-For what?”

"The beauty pageant! You wrote down our names without telling us, didn't you!?" Chie scolded the boy, pure anger rushing through her veins. She had never been more embarrassed in all her life. It was bad enough that she had horrible stage fright; she couldn't help but feel her muscles tense in up, freezing in place as her legs rocked gently back and forth in a fearful shake. But now she had to do it while a bunch of people she didn't know eyed her with the thoughts of sexual pleasure? She was not okay with that; not in the slightest. Same could be said of Yukiko and Naoto, though Rise actually looked like she was looking forward to it. Any chance to get some attention towards her and her body apparently.

"N-No! It wasn't me! Why do you automatically blame me!?" Yosuke frantically defended himself. They were completely right and he knew it, but that didn't mean he was okay with constantly getting blamed without any reasonable evidence indicating he was the culprit. Not like they had his fingerprints or something. "I-I mean, if you don't wanna do it, you just say no, right? Like it was just a joke." Yosuke suggested after a moment. After all, no harm, no foul right? They couldn't really castrate the guy if he didn't actually hurt anyone, could they? Well given that it was Chie, probably. Chie's glare only seemed to intensify though as Yosuke advised her to just back out of her obligations.

"We wouldn't be so pissed if we could do that! With Kashiwagi planning this year's event, even those who got entered by other people can't back out!" Chie shouted back with anger. It wasn't just enough that everyone probably thought she was some kind of whore now signing up for a competition like this, but now she couldn't even back out? She could never show her face around this goddamned school again because of Yosuke.

"Seriously? Must've been something in the fine print I overlooked..." Yosuke mused silently to himself, averting eye contact with Chie for a brief moment as he rubbed at his chin. Of course, in his brief lapse of judgment as he discovered his little prank was irreversible, he had accidentally admitted he HAD committed the crime; and not a single person was please. Kanji was indifferent, but everyone else; livid would be an understatement.

"So it was you!"

"Oh crap...!" Yosuke muttered with great fear as he realized just how much he slipped up. Though that was immediately cut off by Justin slamming him down to the ground, pinning him so he couldn't escape. He wasn't sure how he was going to make Yosuke face punishment for his crimes, but he knew he wanted it to be slow and painful. Until then, a mouth full of cement would more than suffice as he contemplated how to make Yosuke atone for his sins.

"Oh you sick fucking bastard." Justin muttered between his teeth as he held Yosuke's head into the ground. He had never been more disgusted in a human being than now. What kind of sick person signs someone up for this kind of thing

against their will. What Yosuke did here could essentially be classified as rape... Only, you know... Not rape at all. Same principals really; immediate sexual satisfaction by forcing a woman to do something of a sensual nature against their will. Only difference is sexual contact as far as Justin could tell. Well all the same, Justin was enjoying scraping Yosuke's skull against the pavement when Rise felt the need to speak up; not against Yosuke, mind you, but rather in his defense. It was hard to say whether this was surprising or not.

"Hey... Do you want us to take part in the beauty pageant?" Rise questioned after a moment, genuinely curious. It got quite a bit of glares from the other girls, who had no intention of participating, even if the other guys wanted them to. They could go look up porn on the internet for all they cared, they were NOT doing this shit, standing up in front of people only to be degraded because they were 'attractive.' Disgusting really.

"W-Well yeah. I mean, you guys know how popular Yukiko is here. And on top of that, we have an idol and a Detective Prince. What's the point of having a beauty pageant if all these incredible heroines aren't going to take part!?" Yosuke choked up to the best of his ability from his place along the floor, Justin still pressing him against the roof's surface with great intensity. Yukiko and Naoto weren't sure whether to take this all as a compliment or not, though Rise certainly did, and Chie certainly did not. Probably because out of all the people listed, she was oddly absent from the list.

"So where do I fit in!?" Chie questioned, glaring at Yosuke for only a brief minute before it slowly dawned upon her that she was purposely left out of the list. Justin usually wasn't one to care what people thought of Chie, so long as they kept it to themselves, but this just pissed him off; especially that hurt expression that slowly swept across her face as the realization set in that she didn't exactly fit in that list at all. So Justin did what any sensible human being would do. He curb stomped Yosuke's fucking skull into the ground.

"GAH! MOTHERFUCKER!" Yosuke shouted in pain, rolling over and grasping at his jaw as he tried to numb the pain now shooting through his gums. Naoto shot Justin a slight glare, hoping to make him aware that she could arrest him for assault right now if she wanted to. Though truth be told; she was totally okay with Yosuke getting his just deserts, so she bit her tongue on the matter. Justice to an extent it seemed.

"Hey, you want us to be in it too, don'tcha, Kanji!?" Rise began to tease Kanji, deciding that since Yosuke was too busy rolling around in his blood to be snarky, she would uphold his legacy. After all, it wasn't like she didn't love embarrassing Kanji anyway. It was like a past time for Yosuke and Rise. They'd totally make a good couple; assuming of course that Yosuke wasn't the most perverted fucker in the world. But then, Rise was very flirtatious, so that might have just worked out in

the long run. Who even knows; no use pondering possibilities. Kanji, being the clueless fucker he was, didn't seem to really get what Rise was getting at here.

"Huh...? I ain't interested in that stuff..."

"Naoto-kun... Kanji-kun says that he really wants you to be in it." Rise turned to Naoto, deciding to go over Kanji's head on this. It was clear the boy had the hots for Naoto; and if he wasn't going to act on it, she'd do it for him. If only just to see him fidget like a motherfucker. She succeeded in that regard, given that his face immediately burned a fierce red color, eyes widening with embarrassment and fear. Why was it no one could just leave his affairs to him?

"Wha--!? I-I didn't say nothing!" He angrily and hesitatingly countered. He DIDN'T say anything on the matter; he didn't need people putting words into his mouth and looking like some kind of ass. Besides; it wasn't like that. Honestly. It wasn't. HONEST. Yosuke groaned a bit as he slowly got back up from the ground, wiping blood from the corners of his mouth as he tried to steady himself. He probably deserved that, but goddamn, did Justin have to hit THAT hard over something so trivial?

"What about you Justin? You want them to be in it, right?" Yosuke groaned a bit, backing up ever so slightly lest the question piss Justin off again. And it did, given that not only Justin, but also Yu turned to him to glare. Both of them were very vocally against this; partially out of jealousy, partially out of respect for the girls' wishes, partially because this was just degrading in every way.

"Do I need to bash your head in a second time? Maybe that would knock some damn sense into your head!" Justin shouted back, damn near getting back into Yosuke's face to sock him one when Yu held him back by the arm. Yu wouldn't mind seeing Yosuke get knocked out, but it seemed he had taken enough damage to the noggin today as it was. Let's not push our luck and give the guy a concussion after all. Well more of a concussion than he probably had after Justin slammed his skull into the ground with his foot. Yosuke immediately backed away, hands up as if to show he didn't want any trouble. Too bad he had created trouble when he went through with this dumbass plan of his. Chie sighed slightly, shaking her head at the misfit boys.

"At least some of you aren't getting on the bandwagon with Yosuke." Chie sighed with slight relief. At the very least it was nice to see that this was more Yosuke's fault than any of theirs. She just might have to spare them the embarrassment of revenge. But probably not. Rise shrugged a bit; to be quite honest, she wasn't seeing the problem. But then, she made a career out of this; of course she didn't see the problem.

"So long as there are people looking forward to seeing me, I might as well put on a show for 'em. Of course, there's no need to involve my agency in this." Rise mused

out loud. She still hadn't found a second record label to sign on to, so it shouldn't be a problem anyway. Besides, it wasn't like they really had any jurisdiction over what she did with her body; they just needed to deal with the PR backlash.

"Th-That's right! That's the way to go! Teddie's looking forward to it too. Actually, I think he was more excited than anyone. It was him who was pushing me to sign you all up." Yosuke tried to shift the blame, perhaps fearing Justin would maul him if he didn't. And while it certainly made sense that Teddie would do that, Justin wasn't buying it. He wouldn't even get to see it since he'd be busy at work; especially since Maya had taken the day off for the festival. Justin already got things checked out with the office to see if she could come with the day. Seems outside visitors were alright on those days. Point was, Teddie gained nothing from this. Yosuke, on the other hand...

"Ugh, so Ted's behind this too..."

"We're in an awkward position... If we can't refuse, I suppose there's no sense in arguing the point... But it seems ill-fitting for someone like me to get up on stage... I wonder if there's any way I could take it up with the school authorities..." Naoto mused to herself, still trying to ponder a way out of the situation she had managed to dig herself into. Well, that Yosuke had dug her into. She supposed she could just... you know... not show up? What were they going to do if she didn't? Disciplinary action? That wasn't her signature, and she could prove it with forensic science if need be.

"I-I... don't think it's a problem at all. I-I mean, just do it! Ya know... Seriously!" Kanji interrupted rather frantically, but also hesitantly at the same time, as if trying to choose his words carefully but quickly at the same time. It made his speech rather choppy, and... well obvious that he had a massive erection in his pants. Probably. No one would dare look at that guy's crotch. 'Cept maybe Maya that one time; though they didn't talk about that for obvious reasons. Mostly so they could protect their own crotches from testicular manslaughter.

"Dude... Looks like your blood's boiling even more than usual..." Yosuke remarked with amusement, sitting down on the vent until his head would stop buzzing from the hard blow he took to the skull. He should have known; it had been too long since Justin kicked the crap out of him. A whole week! A new record!

"Silly Kanji. Just tell her you wanna see her on the stage. So, is it a deal? The four of us will be in the beauty pageant?" Rise chuckled a bit before blowing Kanji, and by extension Naoto as she began to interrogate Kanji on the matter, off, turning her attention to the rest of the girls. You could tell Chie and Yukiko still wanted nothing to do with this. They were only upset that they were being pressured into this; no one should have to do this under any condition.

“You guys don’t have to do it if you don’t want. Seriously; I’ll replace the sheet or something.” Justin suggested, noticing how disheartened Chie was about all of this. It was obvious she was uncomfortable with all this; and how could she not? She had stage-freight AND she was self-conscious as fuck. Beauty pageants were like a punch to the uterus for her. She eventually sighed and shook her head after a moment.

“I’ll do it if I can kick Yosuke again.”

“Wait, wh-“

“Permission granted.”

“W-wait wait, I never agreed to thi- GAH”

“Good, neither did we.”